

# Stress Management

TU Dublin Student  
Counselling Service



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**DUBLIN**  
OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA  
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## What is Stress?

Stress is an emotional and physical response to demanding situations, including symptoms that may include worry, a feeling of being overwhelmed, increased heart rate, headaches, sleep difficulties, procrastination, and more.



## Stress Isn't All Bad!

At lower levels, stress prepares our bodies for day-to-day challenges by boosting energy, improving cognitive performance, and focusing attention. It's when stress is too extreme, or lasts for too long, that it becomes problematic.

**List some of your greatest stresses at present**



A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a light beige background, intended for writing a list of current stresses.

**How do you currently cope with stress?**



A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a light beige background, intended for writing about current coping strategies.



# Reducing Stress

The negative effects of stress can be reduced through practising self-care such as physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and professional self-care.



**Reducing Stress  
by Changing  
Your Thinking**

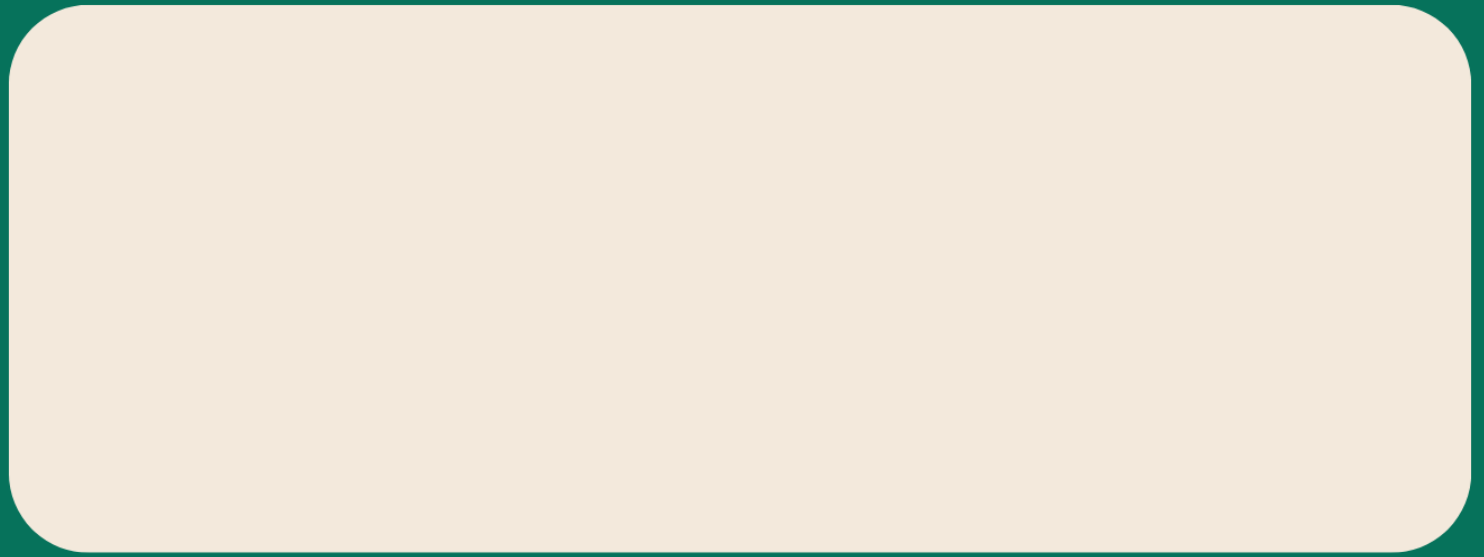


**Cognitive  
Restructuring**

**5 Steps**

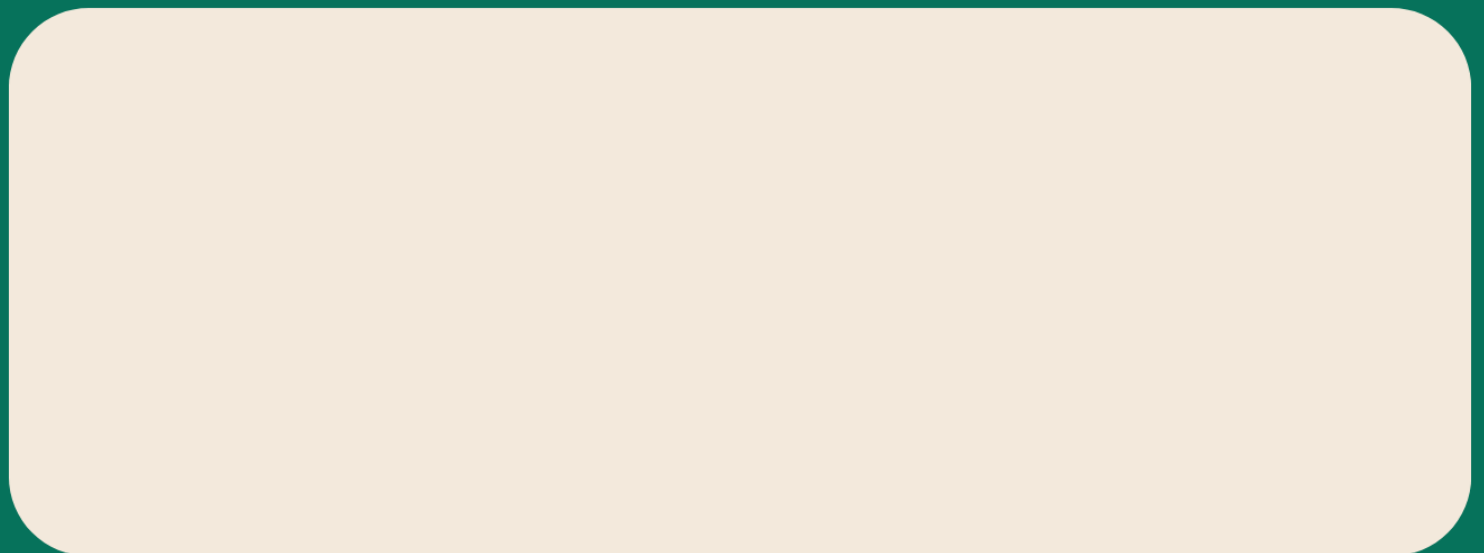
## **Step 1: Identify the Situation**

Describe the situation that triggered your negative mood.



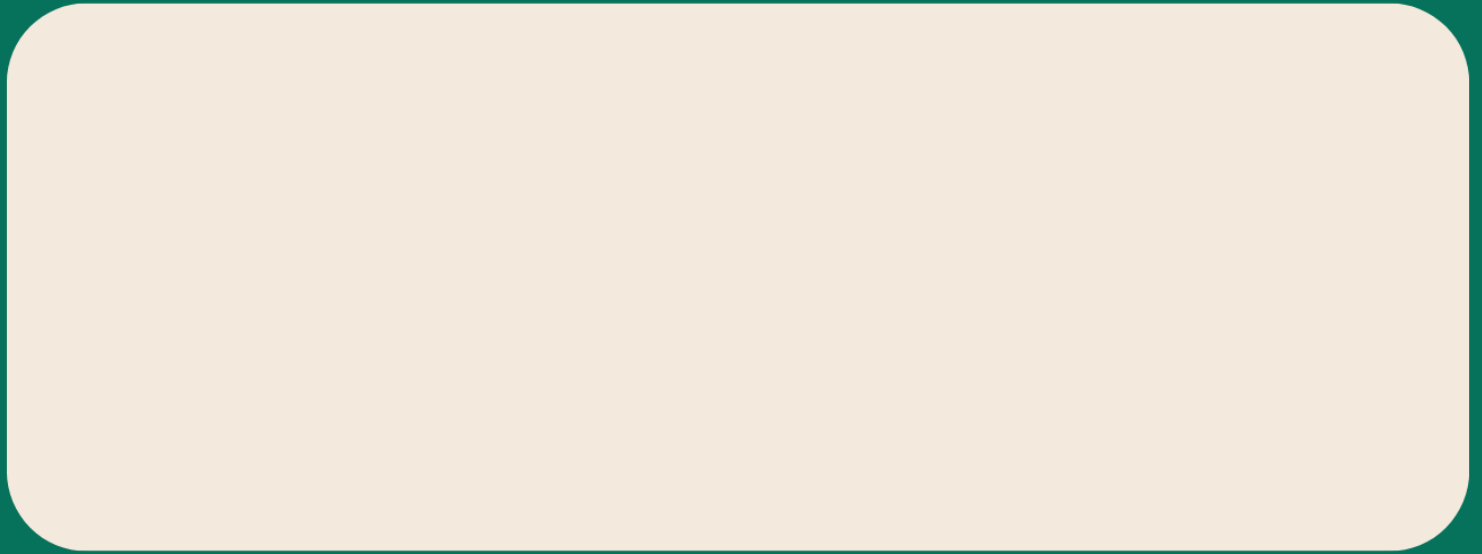
## **Step 2: Analyse Your Mood**

Describe how you felt in the situation, and how you're feeling now.



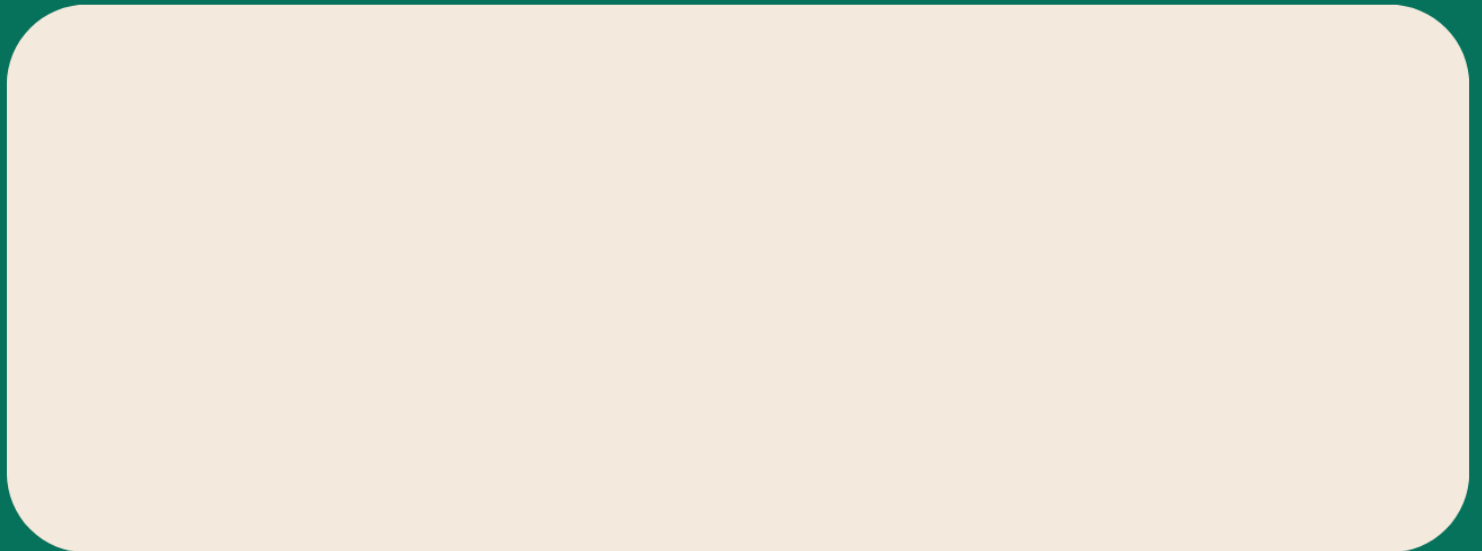
## **Step 3: Identify Automatic Thoughts**

Make a list of your automatic thoughts in response to the situation.



## **Step 4: Find Objective Evidence**

Write down any evidence you can find that supports the automatic thoughts and any evidence that contradicts the thought.



## Step 5: Review Your Present Mood

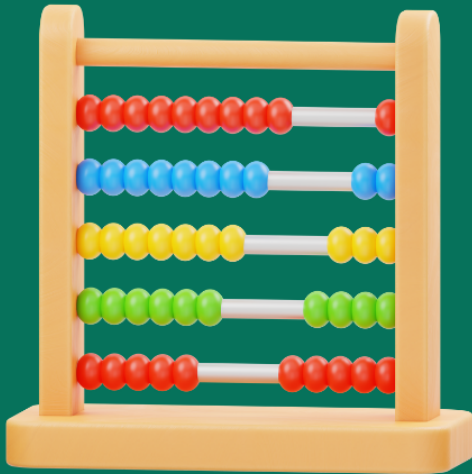
Take a moment to assess your mood. Do you feel better about the situation? Is there any action you need to take? Write down your present mood, along with any further steps that you need to take.



*Cognitive restructuring techniques deconstruct unhelpful thoughts and rebuild them in a more balanced and accurate way.*



# Relaxation Techniques



BREATHE

# Deep Breathing

1

Breathe in slowly. Count in your head and make sure the inward breath lasts at least 5 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of the air filling your lungs.

Hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds (again, keep count). You don't want to feel uncomfortable, but it should last quite a bit longer than an ordinary breath.

2

Breathe out very slowly for 5 to 10 seconds (count!). Pretend like you're breathing through a straw to slow yourself down. Try using a real straw to practice.

3

Repeat the breathing process until you feel calm.

4



# Progressive Muscle Relaxation



1

Tense the muscles in your toes by curling them into your foot. Notice how it feels when your foot is tense. Hold the tension for 5 seconds.

Release the tension from your toes. Let them relax. Notice how your toes feel differently after you release the tension.

2

3

Tense the muscles all throughout your calf. Hold it for 5 seconds. Notice how the feeling of tension in your leg feels.

Release the tension from your calf, and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs.

4

*Follow this pattern of tensing and releasing tension all throughout your body. After you finish with your feet and legs, move up through your torso, arms, hands, neck, and head.*



# Mindfulness Exercises

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to whatever is happening in the present moment and experiencing it without judgement. Anyone can practice mindfulness. It is easy to fit into your day. You can do it 1 minute at a time.

# Body Scan

During the body scan exercise you will pay close attention to physical sensations throughout your body. The goal isn't to change or relax your body, but instead to notice and become more aware of it. Don't worry too much about how long you practice, but do move slowly.

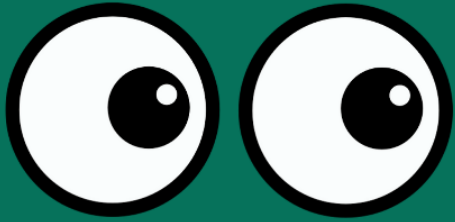


Begin by paying attention to the sensations in your feet. Notice any sensations such as warmth, coolness, pressure, pain, or a breeze moving over your skin. Slowly move up your body - to your calves, thighs, pelvis, stomach, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, neck, and finally your head. Spend some time on each of these body parts, just noticing the sensations.

After you travel up your body, begin to move back down, through each body part, until you reach your feet again. Remember: move slowly, and just pay attention.



# Five Senses



Use this exercise to quickly ground yourself in the present when you only have a moment. The goal is to notice something that you are currently experiencing through each of your senses.

Name 1 thing you can taste

Name 2 things you can smell

Name 3 things you can hear

Name 4 things you can feel

Name 5 things you can see

# Stress Management Tips

Keep in mind that stress isn't a bad thing.

Focus on the basics.

Set aside time for yourself.

Prioritise your responsibilities.



Keep things in perspective.



**Remember!**

Talk about your problems, even if they won't be solved.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket.